

Attorney General's Council on Collegiate Opioid Misuse

Resources for Student Engagement



Attorney General Josh Stein

North Carolina Department of Justice

May 2018

Introduction

Every day, four North Carolinians die from a medication or drug overdose. Since 1999 the number of drug poisoning deaths in North Carolina has increased by 440%, from 363 to 1,965 in 2016. Beyond the painful human cost, the economic impact of the problem is staggering. The President's Council of Economic Advisors estimated the economic cost of the opioid crisis was more than \$500 billion dollars in 2015. For every overdose death in North Carolina, there are 16 emergency department visits to treat non-fatal overdoses. Hundreds of thousands of people across North Carolina are struggling with substance use disorder.

Since taking office, Attorney General Stein has convened round table discussions in more than 20 communities across the state to share local strategies and perspectives. He has initiated an investigation into the role of drug manufacturers and distributors in creating the crisis, and has promoted legislative action to address it—including the STOP Act, which became law in June 2017. In October 2017, Attorney General Stein took this work directly to students by launching the Attorney General's Council on Collegiate Opioid Misuse.

Attorney General Josh Stein created the Council on Collegiate Opioid Misuse to confront the opioid crisis on North Carolina's college campuses. The Council is comprised of students from colleges and universities across the state, including those active in student government, public health and social work studies, collegiate recovery programs, campus athletics and Greek life. The Council convened four times during the 2017-18 school year to meet with professionals in a range of disciplines related to substance misuse and discuss strategies for addressing substance misuse at their schools. As a result of the year of collaboration, the Council has compiled a toolkit of resources for students seeking to combat opioid misuse at the collegiate level.



Attorney General Josh Stein speaking in Boone at the kick-off of the Council on Collegiate Opioid Misuse.

Coalition Building

The most important first step when seeking to impact change in a community is to understand the landscape of the issue and identify who shares the same goals. This fundamental knowledge is critical for effective collaboration between those already working or willing to start working toward achieving any shared goals. Nearly every community in North Carolina has residents who are pursuing a solution to the opioid epidemic and many communities have established formal coalitions. Forming partnerships, joining coalitions and coordinating efforts across many diverse groups brings together a valuable range perspectives and expertise and eliminates the unnecessary duplication of efforts. This section provides ideas for collaboration opportunities.

- ▶ **Partner with the recovery and prevention communities on campus.**

Most colleges and universities have established recovery communities and prevention experts on campus. Utilize the expertise, resources and determination of these communities. Collaborate to achieve your shared goals and avoid duplicating efforts.

- ▶ **Partner with local law enforcement.**

Work with campus or town law enforcement to help promote prescription drug take back events and the use of permanent medication drop boxes. Coordinate a drug take back day event on your campus and safe disposal opportunities for students on moving days at the end of the school year. Partner with law enforcement to distribute information about campus recovery resources and prevention efforts.

- ▶ **Create a student government subcommittee.**

Work with student government to create a subcommittee focused on opioid misuse prevention and recovery. Serve as a liaison between students and school administration, student health professionals, and other stakeholders to coordinate efforts for improving access to substance use support services for students. Use student government resources to organize and fund prevention and awareness programs on campus.

- ▶ **Form a “town and gown” partnership.**

Seek out and join an existing community coalition in your city or the surrounding area as a representative of your campus. Host an on-campus meeting with coalition members and other relevant community members to explore strategies for reaching common goals. Look for opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate with off-campus community members to address the negative impact of opioid misuse on communities and pursue prevention efforts.

► **Partner with student athletics.**

Work with sports teams on campus to promote safe use, safe storage and safe disposal of prescription medications. The high injury rates among college athletes often correlate with high rates of opioid prescriptions. Utilize the unique platform of collegiate athletic programs to promote prescription drug take back events on campus and to raise awareness about opioid misuse.

► **Collaborate with residence hall advisors.**

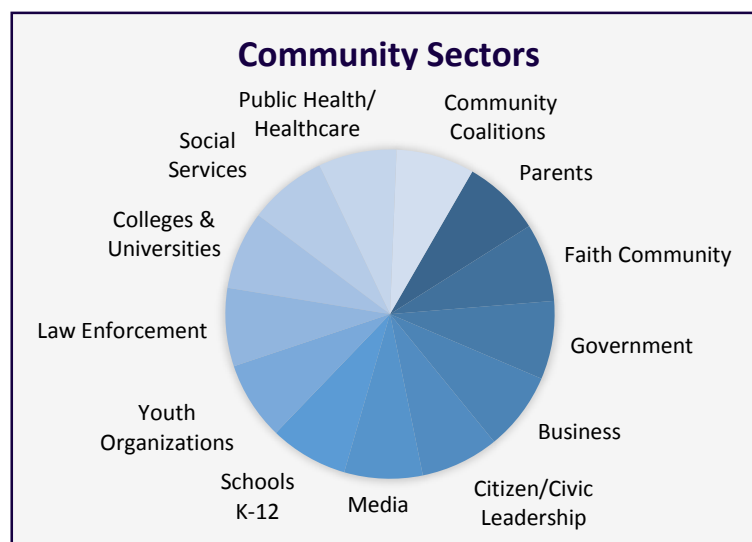
Students and staff who live and work in campus residence halls often have the most consistent contact with their student neighbors. Resident advisors are important resources for students and can often times be a first line of defense for students experiencing an opioid overdose. Work with the student housing managers and school administration to ensure that resident advisors receive training in how to recognize signs of an opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone. Partner with advisors to educate students about safe medication drug disposal and the locations of nearby permanent drop box locations. Make sure advisors have access to information about treatment and recovery resources.

► **Engage researchers in grassroots efforts.**

Seek out students and faculty involved in public health, social work, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, or other related studies and invite them to participate in the prevention and recovery efforts on campus.

► **Team up with peer educators.**

Many student health centers employ students to serve as peer health educators. Collaborate with peer educators to address opioid misuse on campus by distributing informational materials in high traffic areas on campus.



Consider potential partners in all community sectors both on and

Communications Tools

Raising awareness about opioids and substance use disorder is essential to effectively improve campus culture and the lives of students impacted by opioid misuse. Students can use various communications tools to spread messages about the risks of opioid misuse, existing treatment and recovery resources and events that support prevention and recovery efforts.

- ▶ **Use non-stigmatizing language.**

Research person-first language guidelines available on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website to ensure proper use of non-stigmatizing language in all communications. Offer training seminars on person-first language for students who want to be recovery advocates on campus or in the community. Consult the Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist or the Collegiate Recovery Program Coordinator on campus for additional guidance.

- ▶ **Leverage social media.**

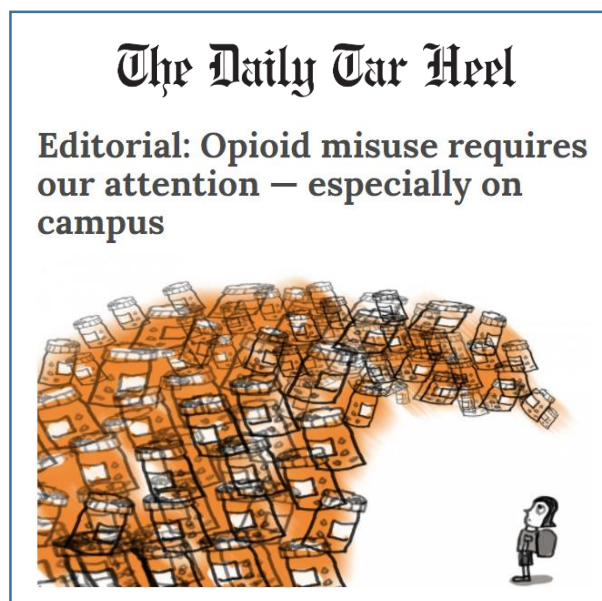
Use social media to promote efforts to reduce opioid misuse and the importance of students receiving support from their peers and school administration. Use relevant and compelling messages and cross-promote on appropriate social media platforms to increase message visibility among social media users.

- ▶ **Engage local media.**

Invite members of the press from local newspaper and TV stations to attend and promote public forums on opioid misuse and other related events on campus. Pitch ideas for stories related to opioid misuse on college campuses and the value of increasing resources dedicated to collegiate recovery programs. Create opportunities for students to submit op-eds to local and college newspapers about the student perspective on strategies to decrease opioid misuse on campus.

- ▶ **Cross-promote events with coalition partners.**

Ask coalition members to promote campus events in their networks and offer to promote their events to students and university administrators. Cross-promotion can increase visibility and strengthen support for shared goals on campus and in the community.



Councilmember Eliza Filene wrote this editorial in the UNC student newspaper in November.

▶ **Record a PSA.**

Work with the school radio station to record public service announcements or write a script to raise awareness about opioid misuse, substance-free social events on campus and treatment and campus recovery resources. Invite the station to be a partner in the communications campaign.

▶ **Distribute informational materials.**

Create materials or utilize available materials about opioid misuse and campus recovery resources. Check with the campus student health center and with state or national organizations for posters, flyers and other informational materials that align with campaign messaging. Distribute materials in high-traffic areas on campus such as cafeterias, libraries, gyms and residence halls.

▶ **Coordinate communications campaigns and events with holidays, other campus events or large communications campaigns.**

Leverage relevant current events or national campaigns (i.e. National Recovery Month or North Carolina Poison Prevention Week) as opportunities to implement advocacy and social events on campus that promote recovery from opioid misuse. Focus communication campaign messaging during holiday season and regularly scheduled breaks from school (i.e. Summer, Fall, and Spring Break) to target opioid use prevention strategies and other campus recovery resources available to students. Create a calendar that lists all the various events and campaigns to guide your planning.

▶ **Host a public forum to discuss opioid misuse.**

Invite experts to discuss the opioid epidemic in a public forum and share strategies for combatting opioid misuse. Invite panelists with a range of perspectives, such as public health professionals, recovery advocates, social workers and student wellness staff. Invite students and other community members in recovery to share their stories.

▶ **Use student orientations to raise awareness.**

Student orientations—including new students, transfer students and graduate students—are good opportunities to reach a large audience of students. Use orientations as an opportunity to discuss opioid misuse and share campus resources.

▶ **Engage local leaders.**

Contact government officials and local community leaders to help promote prescription drug take back events, public forums or other prevention and awareness activities on campus.

Prevention

Prevention of substance misuse is always preferable and more financially efficient than treatment. Promoting a positive culture on campus centered in healthy choices that enhance academic achievement and lifelong health will reduce opioid and substance misuse. Collegiate substance use prevention efforts seek to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors for students. Risk factors are characteristics or elements that increase a student's likelihood of substance misuse, such as having a family history of substance misuse, experiencing family conflict or having peers who misuse substances. Protective factors are the opposite; these characteristics are associated with a lower likelihood of substance misuse. A few examples of protective factors include opportunities for positive social involvement, recognition for positive behavior, and healthy beliefs and standards for behavior. Below are several strategies to create a culture of prevention on your campus.

- ▶ **Conduct a campus resource inventory.**

Request or assist campus administrators with conducting an audit to understand the landscape of substance use prevention efforts on campus. Utilize findings to identify potential partners and opportunities to promote opioid misuse prevention while avoiding duplicative efforts.

- ▶ **Create a naloxone “brown bag” program on campus.**

Naloxone saves lives by interrupting and reversing opioid overdoses. Work with student health and school administration to create a program that would make naloxone available for anyone on campus who requests it (for themselves or for a friend) without a charge, a prescription, or having to provide a name. The University of North Carolina implemented this type of program; when students request naloxone they are simply given a brown paper bag with naloxone.

- ▶ **Establish medication drop boxes on campus.**

Work with campus law enforcement, the student health center or campus pharmacies to establish a permanent drug take back box on campus. Safely disposing of unused, unneeded medication ensures that these medications are not misused. Installing drop boxes at the campus pharmacy or the campus police station creates a convenient and responsible opportunity for students to dispose of prescription drugs.

- ▶ **Organize convenient medication disposal opportunities on moving day.**

Work with residence life coordinators and campus police to establish convenient ways for students to dispose of unneeded medication when they move out of residence halls at the end of the academic year.

► **Plan substance-free events.**

Organize events on campus such as festivals, movie nights, tailgates or concerts that do not involve alcohol or other substances. Plan these events for weekend nights, spring break, during sports games, or at other times when substance misuse is most common. These events empower students to have fun socializing in a safe environment that will foster a healthy and positive campus culture.



Attorney General Stein partnered with the State Bureau of Investigation, Department of Insurance and local leaders to host take back events across the state during Poison Prevention Week.

► **Host a drug take back drive.**

Plan a drug take back day on campus to promote safe disposal of unused prescription drugs. Partner with campus police, student health professionals, campus pharmacies, student groups and local media to organize and promote a drug take back drive. This type of event can collect large amounts of unneeded medication and creates an opportunity to educate students about the safe use, safe storage, and safe disposal of prescription medication.

► **Organize trainings for faculty and staff.**

Work with the Student Wellness Center to conduct trainings for faculty and staff on strategies to impact substance misuse on campus, common characteristics of substance misuse and the resources available to students. These trainings should also educate faculty and staff on the health factors that qualify substance use disorder as a mental health disorder. Eliminating any stigma related to perceptions of substance misuse as a moral failing of an individual will ensure that the highest quality of service is being provided to all students.

Treatment and Recovery

Despite many encouraging prevention efforts across the state, higher education institutions are often challenging environments for students who are in recovery or actively struggling with substance use disorder. Establishing and maintaining a robust Collegiate Recovery Program is crucial for student wellness and an important counter to the large amount of risk factors present on college campuses. Collegiate Recovery Programs provide a safe and supportive community for students in recovery, students at risk of misusing substances and students who wish to have a substance-free college experience. Currently, nine UNC-system colleges and universities receive state government funding for Collegiate Recovery Programs.

- ▶ **Enhance recovery capital.**

Recovery capital is the quantity and quality of resources at a person's disposal in the initiation and maintenance of recovery. Identify components of vibrant Collegiate Recovery Programs and determine opportunities for improvement on campus. Look for deficiencies such as lacking a permanent, centrally-located safe space for students in recovery or lacking reliable funding mechanisms and create strategies to attain them.

- ▶ **Educate students about treatment resources.**

Determine the location of nearby treatment centers and the process for receiving treatment. Map out options for students who need treatment and distribute the information to students through residence life officers, student health centers and other student organization.



Students from UNC-Greensboro's Spartan Recovery Program and Guildford Technical Community College's Titan Recovery Program socializing at a sober tailgate event before a UNCG women's soccer game.

► **Educate treatment providers and students about campus recovery resources.**

Determine the recovery resources on campus and disseminate the information to students. Work with local treatment centers to make sure they understand what recovery resources are available on campus; if a student seeks treatment, make sure the treatment facility can educate that student about campus recovery resources.

► **Advocate for policy change.**

Discuss policy change with relevant groups, such as recovery groups and professional substance use specialists on campus. Formulate a list of concrete policy changes and share recommendations with potential allies and stakeholders. Create opportunities to discuss recommendations at coalition meetings, to student government, at other student gatherings, or in meetings with other school or local officials.



UNC-Greensboro's Spartan Recovery Program celebrating recovery on "Clean Break" in Daytona Beach, FL and enjoying a fun night of music by the bonfire and glow-in-the-dark flag football on the beach.

► **Create recovery ally zones.**

Work with the Student Health Center to conduct recovery ally trainings for faculty members. After being trained, faculty members can signal to students their status as recovery allies by displaying an icon or sign on their office door.

► **Organize fundraisers for the recovery program.**

Unfortunately, many Collegiate Recovery Programs lack adequate, consistent funds needed to maintain a fully vibrant program. Partner with your Collegiate Recovery Program to organize fundraisers on campus that will raise money for the program.

Members of the Attorney General's Council on Collegiate Opioid Misuse

Kerry Aguilera, UNC-Greensboro

Anna Austin, UNC-Chapel Hill

Lauren Bulla, UNC-Asheville

Anderson Clayton, Appalachian State University

ShaiAnn Clayton, North Carolina A&T

Eliza Filene, UNC-Chapel Hill

Jacqueline Gonzalez, North Carolina State University

Luke Haigh, UNC-Wilmington

Ottillie Mensah, UNC-Wilmington

Jeremy Miller, North Carolina State University

Elvin Peace, Western Carolina University

Claire Perry, East Carolina University

Martha Quattlebaum, UNC-Pembroke

La'Quon Rogers, East Carolina University

Matthew Smart, Western Carolina University

Alex Smith, UNC-Greensboro

Katherine Spalding, Western Carolina University

Shelby Stovall, UNC-Asheville

Dora Tovar, UNC-Asheville